

Application Serial No. 10/626131
Examiner: V.N. Sakran
Art Unit: 3677

PATENT
M&G No. 08688.0324US01

Amendments to the Claims:

This following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A shoelace fastener for a shoe, the shoe including a shoe body with a pair of eyelet tabs, and a shoelace strung on the eyelet tabs and having a pair of distal lace segments, said shoelace fastener comprising:

a substantially rigid fastener body formed with a pair of lace exit holes that are spaced apart from each other in a first direction, a pair of lace entry holes that are disposed between said lace exit holes and that are spaced apart from each other in the first direction, and a pair of anchor portions, each of which is disposed between a respective adjacent pair of said lace entry and exit holes and extends in a second direction transverse to the first directions; and

a flexible pull unit secured on said fastener body;

whereby each of the distal lace segments is extendable through a respective one of said lace entry holes, over a respective one of said anchor portions, and into a respective one of said lace exit holes;

whereby tension applied by the eyelet tabs upon the shoelace forces the distal lace segments against said fastener body for maintaining a tightened state of the shoe; and

whereby a manual pulling force applied on said fastener body through said pull unit permits sliding movement of at least one of the distal lace segments for loosening the shoe accordingly, and

wherein whereby said fastener body has top and bottom sides, said lace entry and exit holes being formed through said top and bottom sides of said fastener body, said fastener body further having a mounting portion between said lace entry holes, said pull unit being secured to said top side of said fastener body at said mounting portion.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The shoelace fastener as claimed in Claim 2 1, wherein said mounting portion of said fastener body is formed with a string hole that extends through said top and bottom sides of said fastener body, said shoelace fastener further comprising a connecting

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string disposed in said string hole, said connecting string having one end connected to said pull unit and an opposite end anchored to said bottom side of said fastener body.

4. (Original) The shoelace fastener as claimed in Claim 3, further comprising a retaining band connected to said pull unit and disposed around said fastener body at said mounting portion.
5. (Original) The shoelace fastener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said pull unit has two loop portions that cooperate with the distal lace segments to form a double-bow configuration.
6. (Original) The shoelace fastener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said pull unit is made of the same material as the shoelace.
7. (Currently Amended) The shoelace fastener as claimed in Claim 2 1, wherein said fastener body has lateral end portions opposite to each other in the first direction, each of said lateral end portions being formed with a lace notch that extends from said bottom side of said fastener body and that is in spatial communication with a respective one of said lace exit holes.
8. (Original) The shoelace fastener as claimed in Claim 7, wherein said fastener body is further formed with a string hole in one of said lateral end portions, said shoelace fastener further comprising a connecting string disposed in said string hole and having one end connected to said pull unit and an opposite end anchored on said fastener body.
9. (Original) The shoelace fastener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said fastener body is an integrally formed plate body made from plastic.
10. (Original) The shoelace fastener as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising a fixing unit adapted for fixing one of the distal lace segments on the respective one of said anchor portions.